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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - PRESIDENT SHARIF: A 60-DAY SCORECARD

REF: A. DOHA 238

[1](#)B. NAIROBI 707

Classified By: Somalia Unit Counselor Bob Patterson: reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. On February 7, President Sheikh Sharif returned to Mogadishu after being elected TFG President. In the two months since, the Sharif government has made progress that has prompted thousands to return to Somalia's capital. While security remains tenuous, there have been no major violent clashes in Mogadishu, and many areas of the city remain calm, although firefights and assassinations do occur.

Extremist groups have resorted to targeted killings of TFG-affiliated politicians and attacks on AMISOM assets. For his part, Sharif, the TFG cabinet, and parliamentarians have worked with religious, clan, business, and civil society leaders to provide limited basic services to a population that is anxious to begin anew. Major shortcomings remain: the TFG lacks basic administrative structures, it is working with almost no resources and has extremely limited capacity, and it has received limited international support. Despite this, payment of salaries to the police has begun, militias are being brought into a common command structure, roadblocks have been dismantled, revenues are being collected from the port and airport, reconciliation continues, and IDPs and Somalis from the diaspora are returning to the country to begin rebuilding efforts. For just sixty days, the TFG has demonstrated respectable progress and, every step of the way, has refused to concede to violent extremists. End summary.

High Public Approval
Gained By Grassroots Outreach

[1](#)2. (SBU) On February 7, a newly-elected Sheikh Sharif arrived in Mogadishu, where he was enthusiastically welcomed by residents of the capital. In the two months since his return, the Transitional Federal Government that Sharif heads has made progress that has prompted thousands to return to Mogadishu. (Note: UNHCR estimates that 55,000 IDPs have returned to Mogadishu and in recent weeks, anecdotal evidence shows a marked increase in Somalis returning to their homes from Nairobi.) Conversations with Somalis suggest that President Sharif enjoys tacit popular support across most parts of south central Somalia. Mogadishu residents, who have historically been the source of conflict, believe that Sharif's immediate return to the capital after his election in Djibouti signaled the beginning of a new era. Farah Sheikh, Director of the Somali Institute of Management and Administration Development (SIMAD) in Somalia attributes the government's popularity to public fatigue after years of conflict and its sense that the current government has

ushered in enough stability to allow Mogadishu Somalis to reconstruct their lives.

¶3. (SBU) Director of National Intelligence Mohamed Sheikh Hassan said this government, unlike others, has made achievements of sentimental importance: Sharif came to Mogadishu within the first week of his election and the entire parliament relocated to Mogadishu within seven days of its formation; the first time it has worked from the capital since its creation in 2004. Prime Minister Sharmarke's continuous presence in Mogadishu, his low-key personality, and his meetings with representatives of most of the area's clan, religious, and professional constituencies have won wide support. Unlike the contentious relations between former President Yusuf and ex-Prime Minister "Nur Adde," the Sharif - Sharmarke relationship has been, according to close observers and Sharif and Sharmarke themselves, cooperative. Other progress: nominal payments to security forces, paychecks for the police for the first time in over one year, the establishment of transparent mechanisms for the management of airport and port revenues, the dismantling of illegal checkpoints, and the refusal to be drawn into conflict despite repeated provocation, have also enhanced the TFG's popularity and credibility. While concerns remain about its implementation, most recognized the decision to embrace Sharia law as an adroit tactical move that has helped neutralize the opposition.

¶4. (SBU) Multiple sources have confirmed that Sharif and PM Sharmarke have been rallying support for the government through meetings with clan elders, religious scholars and

NAIROBI 00000734 002 OF 004

intellectuals. They have draw upon influential former TFG leaders like former Deputy Prime Minister Ahmed Abdisalam Adan who has been in Mogadishu almost constantly over the last two months and who continues to broker reconciliation efforts. When religious scholars opposed the additional deployment of AMISOM troops, Sharmarke met them in his residence to explain the rationale for AMISOM's continued presence. Sharmarke's outreach was backed publicly by Sharif, who told the Somali public that the continued presence of AMISOM was essential to the survival of his government. Both leaders continue talking to the influential Hawiye Traditional and Unity Council (HTUC), in an effort to soften its opposition to AMISOM's presence. Sheikh Sharif reportedly enjoys unprecedented support across clan lines. His repeated public statements on his readiness to meet with those opposed to him reportedly resonates with the public.

Some Advances in Security

¶5. (C) There has been some tangible, although tenuous progress on security. In an April 8 conversation, Minister of Security Omar Hashi Aden told us from Mogadishu that these achievements have been based on community participation and calls for peace from respected elders. "Our success is not based on money or logistical assets, because we have none," he said. In the first few weeks, former Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) militias and former TFG security forces cleared illegal checkpoints from neighborhoods throughout the city. A Norwegian diplomat, who visited Mogadishu April 5 - 6 for the first time since 2007, told us that she encountered no roadblocks in her travels (unescorted by AMISOM) through Mogadishu. TFG police have occupied most police stations in Mogadishu. The TFG and ARS forces each patrol sectors of the city, and Minister of the Interior Sheikh Abdukadir Ali Omar told us on April 9 that in some areas, they have formed joint units.

¶6. (C) Many of our contacts told us, however, that the "joint security" concept has not yet taken hold and that deep suspicion remains between ARS and TFG militias and their commanders. Sources in and outside the government note the continued lack of a clear command structure. Minister Hashi

told us that while appointments of key commanders have yet to be made, ARS, TFG, and UIC militias are working together and patrolling jointly in some areas. However, Police Commissioner Abdi Hassan "Qeybdiid" lamented to us that it was nearly impossible for his forces to distinguish between militias loyal to Sharif and other Islamist militia because the ARS contingents do not yet wear uniforms. Hashi said that all military forces are subordinate to Minister of Defense Mohamed Abdi Mohamed "Gandi," the civilian police are the responsibility of the Minister of the Interior, while joint security forces fall to Hashi as Minister of Security. Hashi told us he is working closely with the Minister of Interior to take the lead for the first three months in standing up the full security apparatus. Minister Omar confirmed to us that Hashi, Gandi, and he have a strong collaborative working relationship. In an April 8 conversation, Prime Minister Sharmarke confirmed that Hashi and Omar are cooperating well and that uniforms for at least some of the troops were on the way.

Vetting and Registration Begins:
Joint Security Committee Needed

17. (SBU) The complex division of responsibilities, a residue of hostility between ARS and TFG loyalists, and a lack of funds have meant that TFG security force organization has been halting and has yielded mixed results. On the one hand, the TFG and UNDP have successfully paid police stipends for the first time since July 2008. Via a rigorous UNDP-administered payment mechanism overseen by the Central Bank, Finance Ministry, Interior Ministry and others, 1,300 UNDP-trained TFG police were recently paid their salaries for January 2008. Stipend payments under this thoroughly vetted process should now accelerate, and the mechanism could serve as a model for payments to the joint military forces. With AMISOM's help, the TFG has registered a tranche of 1,350 ARS police recruits in order to balance the TFG-dominated police force. (Note: AMISOM has shared this list with Embassy.) UNDP will soon begin training for this group of police.

NAIROBI 00000734 003 OF 004

18. (SBU) Registration of the Joint Security Force has progressed more slowly. At the new government's urging, AMISOM began feeding, supplying and registering remnants of the TFG security forces in the wake of Ethiopia's mid-January withdrawal. This partial registration was begun in haste, without the coordination of the Joint Security Committee (JSC), which had atrophied as the unity TFG reorganized itself. Some experts fear that without JSC coordination, the registration is unlikely to yield a joint force that has the appropriate clan and political (ARS/TFG) balance. Furthermore, AMISOM reports growing pressure by militia commanders to register their hand-picked troops, raising the possibility of conflicts over clan and political balance. On April 8, security sector donors and AMISOM staff met with UNPOS Security Sector Coordinator Philippe Gourdin. The group agreed to recommend that AMISOM temporarily halt its JSF registration efforts and press the TFG urgently to reconstitute its Joint Security Committee (JSC), with a view to resuming JSF registration under the JSC's leadership.

Reaching Past Mogadishu
To Gain Support in Regions

19. (C) Chief of Intelligence Hassan told us that the TFG must now work to popularize its support outside Mogadishu, especially in regions like Beledweyne and Jowhar, where there are friendly former UIC administrations. Minister of Interior Omar forecast that once the JSF is operating in Mogadishu, the TFG will begin intensive work in the regions. Hashi told us that he is in contact with the District Commissioners of Dhusamareb and Guriel, areas where Alhu Sunna Wal Jamaa (ASWJ) recently won decisive victories over

al-Shabaab. "These leaders are ready to support the TFG," he said. Clan leaders from those areas separately told us that they would like to negotiate a relationship with the government and be part of an eventual national security force. The TFG's inability to offer material support to would-be allies has slowed its efforts to cast its net wider. Sheikh Abdiqadir Somow, Mogadishu-based ASWJ Spokesman, tells us that thus far the public perception of government is positive but could change if there is no tangible progress, especially on security and reconciliation. "After the first 100 days, the honeymoon will be over," Somow said. He confirmed that ASWJ is ready to work with the government on peace building.

Reaching Out:
But Not Crossing Red Lines

¶10. (C) The TFG has not formally indicated how it intends to expand its authority to regions outside Mogadishu, but the preference, and perhaps the necessity given the TFG's lack of military muscle, is through negotiation and efforts to fragment the opposition's sometimes fragile coalitions. We have received numerous reports claiming that Sharif's government, through Minister of the Interior Omar (himself a former Islamist militia commander) is winning support from within the ranks of Hisbul Islam (HI). (Note: At the beginning of February, four Islamist groups united under the banner of HI and launched an attack against AMISOM and government forces in which close to 100 were killed.) Omar's efforts appear to have borne fruit; a recent split among the HI leadership has prompted HI commander and former UIC defense commander Yusuf "Indha Adde" to begin negotiations that could lead to his affiliation with the TFG, and apparently marginalized Hassan Dahir Aweys confederate Omar Iman.

¶11. (C) In addition to courting "Indha Adde," we have been told by many contacts that former Kismaayo Mayor Ahmed "Madobe," who President Sharif prevailed on the Government of Ethiopia to release from prison, has returned to Kismaayo where his efforts, it is hoped, will weaken al-Shabaab's grip on the city. Minister of Security Omar Hashi described "Madobe's" public repudiation of the TFG as "part of the strategy," and predicted that "Madobe's" efforts will chip away at al-Shabaab's authority in the Kismaayo area.

¶11. (C) Al-Shabaab has also been fractured by challenges and in some cases armed resistance from communities and clan

NAIROBI 00000734 004 OF 004

militias. Popular fatigue with the violence has led it to adopt in Mogadishu a lower-profile campaign to upend the TFG.

It has resorted to targeted assassination attempts, for which it generally does not claim responsibility, and media efforts to portray AMISOM as the new Ethiopians and as sponsors of the TFG. Former TFG Deputy Prime Minister Ahmed Abdisalaam Aden has told us that al-Shabaab's attempted assassination of Minister of the Interior Omar, had it succeeded, would have "severely weakened the mobilization capacity of the TFG," because of the sizable militia loyal to Omar and his credentials among members of the ICU. Sheikh Sharif's courageous willingness to publicly associate himself and the TFG with AMISOM, like his embrace of Sharia, seems to have neutralized al-Shabaab's media efforts to tar AMISOM with the Ethiopian brush. AMISOM's recent, relatively restrained response to attacks on it has also reduced public resentment.

¶12. (C) Former Mogadishu Mayor Mohamed Dheere joins many others with whom we have spoken in citing Sheikh Sharif's ICU credentials as key to his success. "He knows how to fight them, and the presence of many ICU operatives in the TFG ranks gives the government credibility with the ICU," Dheere said.

¶13. (C) Although the TFG appears to lack a policy for engagement with the opposition, it appears that red lines exist. Sheikh Sharif indicated as much in rejecting a reported \$3 million per month for six months offered by the Government of Qatar at the Arab League Summit, noting that there were too many "conditions" attached to the aid (ref a). His Foreign Minister told Embassy Doha and the Somalia Unit that among the conditions was unacceptable pressure to engage with the TFG's hardcore opponents. Also, contrary to rumors that Sharif's representatives are in direct negotiation with Hassan Dahir Aweys, Sharif is making no direct overtures (ref b). President Sharif clearly told the Ambassador that there were senior extremist leaders who could not be moved and thus far, Sharif has refused to be pushed into engaging with them.

U.S Remains a Critical Partner

¶14. (C) It has been only sixty days and the TFG confronts a daunting agenda. It is fatally underfunded, lacks people with the necessary experience and skills, remembers or knows almost nothing of what a government does, and controls even by proxy little of a country that is the locus of an ever-expanding humanitarian crisis. Crucial to its success, most Somalis believe is U.S support, and we are repeatedly urged by Somalis of all stripes to have the USG engage in a much more robust way.
RANNEBERGER